

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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**DAVIS LEADS SIMON BY SEVEN POINTS.
INCREASING NUMBER OF VOTERS
UNABLE TO OFFER A PREFERENCE.
MANY WHO DO ARE CASTING NEGATIVE
RATHER THAN POSITIVE VOTES.**

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by Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

After many months of pre-primary and pre-general election campaigning in the Governor's race, there are growing signs that the contest may be decided not on the basis of which major party candidate is preferred by the voters but who is disliked the least.

A just completed statewide *Field Poll* reveals the electorate to be in an unusually negative mood in the way it perceives both Democrat Gray Davis and Republican Bill Simon. The poll finds Davis leading Simon 38% to 31%, and 9% preferring other candidates. And, at a time when preferences usually begin to harden, instead since July there has been an increase from 16% to 22% of those who say they are undecided and a corresponding decline in support for each of the two major party candidates.

The poll reveals these other unusual aspects of the campaign: widespread antipathy toward the candidates, that many votes are being shaped against rather than for the candidates, and a strong desire to support a former Republican candidate who will not be on the November ballot.

Both Davis and Simon are viewed more unfavorably than favorably by majorities of the likely voting electorate. Davis is viewed unfavorably by a 52% to 41% margin, while Simon's image rating is even more negative – 50% unfavorable vs. 34% favorable.

Among those saying they intend to support Davis, more than one in three (37%) say their preference is motivated more by a desire to vote against Simon than as a positive expression of support for Davis. Among Simon voters, 63% are guided more by their antipathy toward the Governor than by an affirmation of Simon.

Underscoring this weak commitment to the candidates is the fact that if Republican former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan were the GOP nominee instead of Simon, he would be preferred over Davis among likely voters by a huge 15-point margin – 49% to 34%.

Trend in overall preferences

Since May 2001, *The Field Poll* has obtained eight separate preference measures pitting Davis against Simon among a cross section of California voters. The current results show that since July support for both candidates has declined, while a growing proportion of voters are unable to express a preference.

In each of these polls, except one taken last February just before the March primary election, Davis has led Simon by margins of 7 to 19 percentage points.

Table 1
Trend of voter preferences for Governor
(among likely voters)

	<u>Davis</u>	<u>Simon</u>	<u>Other candidates</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
September 2002	38%	31	9*	22
July 2002	41%	34	9	16
April 2002	43%	29	**	28
Late February 2002	42%	44	**	14
January 2002	46%	37	**	17
December 2001	44%	28	**	28
September 2001	49%	30	**	21
May 2001	48%	31	**	21

Note: 2001 surveys conducted among all registered voters.

** Includes 3% for Peter Miguel Camejo (Green Party), 2% for Gary David Copeland (Libertarian Party), 1% for Iris Adam (Natural Law Party), 1% for Reinhold Gulke (American Independent Party) and 2% unspecified.*

*** Other parties not measured in previous survey.*

Candidate images

Over the past sixteen months voters have consistently viewed the well-known incumbent Davis in a more negative than positive light, by margins ranging from five to fifteen points. In the current survey the proportion of voters holding a negative impression of the Governor outnumbers those having a positive view by eleven percentage points, 52% unfavorable and 41% favorable.

Table 2
Trend of image ratings of Governor Gray Davis
(among likely voters)

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
September 2002	41%	52	7
July 2002	37%	51	12
April 2002	39%	50	11
Late February 2002	39%	54	7
January 2002	42%	52	6
December 2001	42%	47	11
September 2001	42%	51	7
May 2001	44%	49	7
<u>Party (Sept. 2002)</u>			
Democrats	67%	26	7
Republicans	14%	81	5
Non-partisans/others	39%	49	12

Note: 2001 surveys conducted among all registered voters.

Simon, who started out the campaign as a relatively unknown figure, has been increasingly perceived in a negative light, except for a temporary positive spike immediately prior to the primary. As Simon's identification has risen from 24% in May 2001 to 84% at present, the proportion of voters who hold an unfavorable view of the challenger has more than tripled from 15% to 50%.

Table 3
Trend of image ratings of businessman Bill Simon
(among likely voters)

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
September 2002	34%	50	16
July 2002	30%	39	31
April 2002	28%	33	39
Late February 2002	35%	24	41
January 2002	17%	20	63
December 2001	8%	11	81
September 2001	5%	15	80
May 2001	9%	15	76
<u>Party (Sept. 2002)</u>			
Democrats	14%	69	17
Republicans	59%	27	14
Non-partisans/others	27%	55	18

Note: 2001 surveys conducted among all registered voters.

Lesser of two evils

To a great extent preferences now being registered for both Davis and Simon are votes against the opposing candidate than positive expressions of support for the man being preferred.

In Davis' case, more than one-third (37%) say their support for the Governor is more a vote against Simon than for Davis, while 56% say it is a vote in favor of the Governor. In Simon's case, this "lesser of two evils" sentiment is even more pronounced, with six in ten (63%) saying their support for Simon is more an anti-Davis expression than an affirmation of the GOP candidate.

Table 4

Extent to which Davis and Simon voters are casting positive or negative votes

	<u>Davis voters</u>
<u>Davis' support is more a vote...</u>	
For Davis	56%
Against Simon	37
No opinion	7
	<u>Simon voters</u>
<u>Simon's support is more a vote...</u>	
For Simon	32%
Against Davis	63
No opinion	5

Support for a candidate not on the ballot

The Field Poll tested the latent support for the two losing candidates in the GOP primary – Riordan and California Secretary of State Bill Jones – in hypothetical scenarios of each being the GOP nominee against Davis instead of Simon.

The results show that if Riordan were the GOP nominee, the former Los Angeles Mayor would be leading Davis by a wide fifteen-point margin – 49% to 34%.

A large proportion (31%) of Democrats supports Riordan over Davis in the current survey. Riordan also gets huge support (72%) from Republican voters when paired against Davis. Among voters who currently prefer Davis over Simon, nearly one in four (23%) would leave Davis and support Riordan if the latter were on the ballot.

Table 5
Preferences for Governor if the GOP nominee were
former L.A. Mayor Richard Riordan instead of Bill Simon
(among likely voters)

	<u>Riordan</u>	<u>Davis</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
<u>Total</u>	49%	34	7	10
Democrats	31%	54	2	13
Republicans	72%	11	8	9
Other	40%	34	18	8
Davis voters	23%	69	1	7
Simon voters	78%	7	10	5
Other/undecided	44%	23	10	23

When Jones is paired against Davis, he also fares better than Simon, and is in a near dead heat with the Governor – 37% for Davis and 36% for Jones.

Table 6
Preferences for Governor if the GOP nominee were
California Secretary of State Bill Jones instead of Bill Simon
(among likely voters)

	<u>Davis</u>	<u>Jones</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
<u>Total</u>	37%	36	7	20
Democrats	60%	17	6	17
Republicans	9%	64	6	21
Other	42%	21	15	22
Davis voters	82%	5	2	11
Simon voters	3%	72	7	18
Other/undecided	23%	31	15	31

Demographic sub-group analysis

In analyzing Davis' current statewide lead over Simon, the Governor loses just 8% of the Democratic vote to his GOP challenger, while Davis captures just 10% of the vote of Republicans. Among non-partisans and others, Davis has a 29% to 19% lead over Simon, while 16% support other candidates and a huge 36% are undecided.

Davis has big leads over Simon on the order of 15 to 19 percentage points, respectively, in Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay Area – two regions which combined represent about one-half of the state's likely voters. Voter preferences in the Central Valley are closely divided, with Davis at 38% and Simon at 36%. Simon leads Davis by eight points in the Southern California area outside of Los Angeles County.

Male voters are almost evenly divided in their preference for the two candidates – 37% for Simon and 35% for Davis. Women favor Davis by thirteen points (40% to 27%).

There are sharp differences in preferences among racial and ethnic groups. White non-Hispanics, who account for about three-fourths (75%) of all likely voters, divide 38% to 34% in Simon's favor. However, Davis has overwhelming preference leads among Latinos (61% to 8%) and Black/African-Americans (50% to 3%).

Davis leads among each voting group whose annual household income is less than \$80,000. However, among those making more than \$80,000 annually, Simon narrowly leads Davis (39% to 35%).

Likely voters in a union-member household favor Davis by nineteen points (45% to 26%). Among voters in non-union households Davis leads Simon by just three points (36% to 33%).

Among the state's Protestants, who represent about 46% of all likely voters, Simon has a 41% to 25% lead over Davis. However, Davis holds big leads among Catholics, those of other religious persuasions and those with no religious preference.

Currently, 55% of the state's likely voters feel that overall California is on the wrong track, while just 30% say the state is heading in the right direction. Among those believing the state is on the wrong track, Simon is preferred over Davis by a two to one margin – 42% to 21%. However, those who think the state is heading in the right direction support Davis by an overwhelming ratio – 68% to 9%.

Table 7
Preferences for Governor – by subgroup
(among likely voters)

	<u>Davis</u>	<u>Simon</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Statewide	38%	31	9	22
<u>Party</u>				
(.45) Democrats	66%	8	8	18
(.40) Republicans	10%	63	7	20
(.15) Non-partisans/others*	29%	19	16	36
<u>Region</u>				
(.24) Los Angeles County	44%	29	6	21
(.32) Other Southern California	29%	37	10	24
(.15) Central Valley	38%	36	7	19
(.25) San Francisco Bay Area	42%	23	11	24
<u>Gender</u>				
(.49) Men	35%	37	9	19
(.51) Women	40%	27	9	24
<u>Ethnicity</u>				
(.75) White non-Hispanic	34%	38	9	19
(.14) Latino*	61%	8	7	24
(.05) Black/African-American*	50%	3	6	41
(.06) Asian/Other*	32%	30	8	30
<u>Age</u>				
(.25) 18-39	43%	30	6	21
(.44) 40-59	35%	32	12	21
(.31) 60 or older	37%	32	7	24
<u>Household income</u>				
(.11) Less than \$20,000*	49%	23	9	19
(.22) \$20,000 - \$39,999	39%	28	9	24
(.36) \$40,000 - \$80,000	38%	31	11	20
(.31) More than \$80,000	35%	39	6	20
<u>Union membership</u>				
(.22) Union member in household	45%	26	13	16
(.78) Non-union household	36%	33	7	24
<u>Religion</u>				
(.46) Protestant	25%	41	8	26
(.24) Catholic	47%	30	7	16
(.30) Other/no preference	52%	18	12	18
<u>Direction of California</u>				
(.30) Right direction	68%	9	7	16
(.55) Wrong track	21%	42	14	23

* Small sample size.

Minor party candidate preferences

In recent weeks there have been numerous media reports about voters being so disenchanted with the two major party candidates that this could lead to a surge in support for the minor party candidates. In the last gubernatorial election, four minor party candidates polled a cumulative total of 3.6% of the vote. The current survey shows that the combined support for the four minor party candidates in this election is 9%, more than double the 1998 result, but similar to what was found in July. The current preference divisions among the minor party candidates are 3% for Peter Miguel Camejo (Green Party); 2% for Gary David Copeland (Libertarian Party); 1% for Iris Adam (Natural Law Party); 1% for Reinhold Gulke (American Independent Party); and 2% unspecified.

Who is going to win?

Voters in this survey were also asked who they thought would win the gubernatorial election, and on this score there is considerable consensus. By a huge 69% to 16% margin, likely voters say Davis will emerge the winner, one in three (35%) of whom expect him to win by a big margin. Among Davis' supporters 93% think he will win, while just 1% believe Simon will be the next governor. Even Simon's supporters are pessimistic about their candidate's chances of winning the election. Nearly half (45%) of Simon voters believe Davis will win re-election, while 40% expect Simon to emerge as the victor.

Table 8
Who voters think will win the Governor's race
(among likely voters)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Davis supporters</u>	<u>Simon supporters</u>	<u>Others</u>
<u>Davis will win</u>	<u>69%</u>	<u>93%</u>	<u>45%</u>	<u>62%</u>
By a big margin	35	54	18	27
By a close margin	26	29	21	27
Don't know about margin	8	10	6	8
<u>Simon will win</u>	<u>16%</u>	<u>1%</u>	<u>40%</u>	<u>11%</u>
By a big margin	2	*	4	1
By a close margin	14	1	35	9
Don't know about margin	*	*	1	1
No opinion	15	5	15	27

** Less than 1/2 of 1%.

Write-in possibilities

Several weeks ago there was a flurry of media reports about talk within Republican circles of the possibility of launching a late campaign effort to urge voters to support either Riordan or Jones as a write-in candidate. The stimulus for this discussion was the belief that Simon was destined to lose and that this prospect would depress overall Republican voter turnout in the election.

Part of the thinking about the possibility of a write-in campaign was the hope that it might encourage more Republicans to go to the polls, bolstering the chances of GOP candidates running for other offices on the ballot. Additionally, it was suggested that while a write-in campaign would probably still result in a Davis victory, the size of his vote would be reduced, thereby diminishing his stature and power during the next four years.

The Field Poll attempted to measure the impact that a write-in campaign for either Riordan or Jones would have on the election outcome. The results show that when Riordan is the suggested write-in candidate he gets 24%, while Simon, the official ballot-listed GOP candidate, would get 19%. Davis still leads the field, but his total vote (36%) is seven points less than the combined Republican candidate vote of 43%.

Table 9
**Preferences for Governor if there were a write-in
campaign to encourage voters to cast write-in votes
for former L.A. Mayor Richard Riordan
(among likely voters)**

	<u>Total</u>
Davis (D)	36%
Simon (R)	19
Riordan (write-in)	24
Other/undecided	21

(D) Democrat, (R) Republican

When Jones is suggested as a possible write-in candidate, Davis still leads the field at 39%, slightly greater than the combined Republican vote of 35% (Simon 23% and Jones 12%).

Table 10
**Preferences for Governor if there were a write-in
campaign to encourage voters to cast write-in votes
for California Secretary of State Bill Jones
(among likely voters)**

	<u>Total</u>
Davis (D)	39%
Simon (R)	23
Jones (write-in)	12
Other/undecided	26

(D) Democrat, (R) Republican

Information About the Survey

Sample Details

The results in this report are based on a statewide survey of 765 Californians considered likely to vote in the November 2002 statewide election. The survey was completed during the period August 23 – September 3, 2002 by telephone in English and Spanish. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize respondent fatigue the overall sample was divided into two random subsamples of 378 and 387 voters each on some questions.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from the overall sample would have a sampling error of +/- 3.6 percentage points. Findings based on questions asked of the random subsamples would have a sampling error of +/- 5.2 percentage points. There are many possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sampling or sequencing, or through undetected omissions or errors in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked

ASKED OF ALL VOTERS

There will be an election this year for Governor of California. If the election for Governor were being held today, for whom would you vote – Democrat Gray Davis, Republican Bill Simon or a candidate from one of the minor parties? **IF DAVIS OR SIMON:** Is your vote more a vote for (Davis) (Simon) or more of a vote against (Simon) (Davis)? **IF MINOR PARTY CANDIDATE:** I am going to read the names of the minor party candidates running for Governor this year. After I read their names and parties, please tell me which candidate you would vote for if the election for Governor were being held today? (**SEE RELEASE FOR NAMES AND PARTIES READ**)

Apart from whom you prefer in the election for Governor, who do you think is going to win the election – Davis or Simon? **IF DAVIS OR SIMON:** Do you think (Davis) (Simon) will win in a close race or by a big margin?

ASKED OF SUBSAMPLE A (IN RANDOM ORDER)

Suppose that instead of Bill Simon, the Republicans had nominated former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan for Governor. If the choices in the general election for Governor were Democrat Gray Davis and Republican Richard Riordan, whom would you prefer if you were voting today?

Suppose that instead of Bill Simon, the Republicans had nominated California Secretary of State Bill Jones for Governor. If the choices in the general election for Governor were Democrat Gray Davis and Republican Bill Jones, whom would you prefer if you were voting today?

ASKED OF SUBSAMPLE B (IN RANDOM ORDER)

There has been some talk in political circles about the possibility of starting a write-in campaign in the November election for Governor.

Suppose that a write-in campaign were begun to encourage voters to write in the name of California Secretary of State Bill Jones for Governor. If the election were being held today and you could vote for Democrat Gray Davis or Republican Bill Simon or you could write in the name of Bill Jones, for whom would you vote for Governor?

Suppose that a write-in campaign were begun to encourage voters to write in the name of former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan for Governor. If the election were being held today and you could vote for Democrat Gray Davis or Republican Bill Simon or you could write in the name of Richard Riordan, for whom would you vote for Governor?

ASKED OF ALL VOTERS

Next, I am going to read some names of people who are running for statewide office this year. As I read each name, please tell me if your opinion of that person is favorable, unfavorable or whether you don't know enough about that person to have an opinion. Is your opinion of (Gray Davis, Governor, Democrat) (Bill Simon, businessman, Republican) favorable or unfavorable?